

City Council  
530 South King Street, Room 202  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Email address: [vchung@honolulu.gov](mailto:vchung@honolulu.gov)  
Fax Number: 768- 3826

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CITY CLERK  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Subject: River Street Residence

Dear Council Members:

I strongly support the River Street Residence – a project that is crucial for our community, the homeless, and the taxpayer. This project will reduce the numbers of chronically homeless individuals by providing permanent rental housing, not a temporary shelter, for individuals and families who are chronically homeless.

Street homelessness is a grave problem on the Mainland and we cannot escape the severity of street homelessness in Honolulu. Earlier this year an estimated 1,193 were homeless in Honolulu and approximately 390 were identified as chronically homeless. As we develop alternatives to end homelessness, there is evidence that permanent supportive housing is more effective than the traditional method of requiring homeless individuals to accept treatment as a condition for shelter or of only utilizing temporary shelters. Research has discovered that providing homelessness with permanent housing along with voluntary in-house services serves to promote stability and individual well-being.

As a result, I strongly support the River Street Residence. This program model has proven to be a very successful approach to ending homelessness on the Mainland. For example:

- Street homelessness has decreased dramatically where Housing First has been practiced. Street homelessness decreased by over 50 percent in Philadelphia, by over 40 percent in San Francisco, and by approximately 40 percent in Denver.
- The cities that have Housing First programs also saw a reduction in arrests of homeless for status crimes (loitering, public intoxication and public urination).
- In a Rhode Island study that compared residence data for the year before entering the Housing First program and one year after, hospital overnights decreased from 534 to 149 overnights and jail overnights decreased from 919 to 149 overnights. After the cost of permanent housing and support services the study found savings of \$8,839 per person per year.
- In a Denver, Colorado study that compared residence data for the two years before entering the Housing First program and the two years after, incarceration days and costs were reduced by 75 percent, detox services and costs were reduced by 82 percent, and the average monthly income increased from \$185 per month to \$431 per month by the end of living at the residence for two years. After the cost of permanent housing and support services the study found savings of \$4,745 per person per year.
- In a Portland, Oregon Housing First Program study that compared participant's data during the year before entering the program and the year after found that Portland is saving the public over \$16,000 per chronically homeless person, including the cost of housing.

I thank you for the opportunity to voice my strong support for the River Street Residence project and ask for your support of the project.

Sincerely,

Mary Pat Waterhouse  
Treasurer, Mental Health America of Hawaii

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COUNCIL